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PREFACE TO OPINIONS OF THE OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

Selected opinions of the Office of General Counsel are published for distribution to offices which may find them a useful reference and aid in answering questions which arise frequently. In addition, certain Decisions of the Comptroller General of the United States which are directed to the Agency or its employees or which relate to questions of particular interest to the Agency are published for distribution to those offices receiving General Counsel Opinions.

Each opinion is accompanied by a headnote which appears in an underlined block on the first page of the opinions. This headnote states the substance of the opinion in as few lines as possible. It is inserted as a reference aid and an identification device only. The headnote may not be relied upon as a statement of the law. This should be derived from a reading of the entire opinion in its proper setting of facts and law.

An essential part of every opinion is the fact situation upon which it is based. The facts should be carefully studied before applying the opinion to a different set of facts in order to make sure that the two sets of facts, those of the opinion and those to which it is thought applicable, are essentially the same.

An equally essential part of every opinion is the state of the law, or the regulations, at the time it is written. Again, care should be taken, in the contemplated application of an opinion to what is deemed to be a similar situation, that neither the law nor the regulations have been changed since the date of the opinion.

Each part of an opinion is to be read only in the context of its other parts. Sentences or paragraphs should not be given significance other than that imparted by their contents. They should not be given independent significance, i.e. lifted out of context and arbitrarily applied to a different situation to which such application appears to be convenient.

An opinion is intended to supplement, explain, or interpret existing law or regulations. It is not intended to replace any of these.

Should there be doubt as to the meaning of any part of an opinion, a request for clarification or interpretation should be made to the Office of General Counsel or a Legal Advisor in the field.

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